

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Eddie Faulkner

Weekday Press Conference



EDDIE FAULKNER: Good afternoon, everybody. How we doing?

Q. Good. How do you get Mitch into a rhythm in a game?

EDDIE FAULKNER: That's what all our thoughts are about, how do we skinny down the game plan in the effort where he can play fast and get the ball out of his hand, get it to the play-makers. Our thoughts are always wrapped around better ways to do that.

Q. In the game a lot of teams around the league are playing with backups. How does a coordinator's job change when you have to go to a backup?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Well, I think one thing that's been good, really going back to what Sully has done, he does a good job going into any game, whether Kenny was healthy or not, of all the those plays are that the guys like. We go into any game situation, if something were to happen mid game, we could easily get to plays that Mitch is comfortable with.

That probably intensifies a little bit when he's the backup because it's probably him with most of the plays. That's been going on all year for us of how we handle business.

Q. What can you do to get Pickens involved?

EDDIE FAULKNER: We definitely need to. Again, that's something that we're always thinking about, trying to scheme and get done. Then we got to throw the ball to him.

I mean, we're going to continue to never tire on trying to get GP the ball. We know what kind of talent he is.

Q. A couple more pre-snap penalties. That was an emphasis. What is causing some of those and what can you do to clean those up?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Constantly continue to emphasize it. I think last week there was one that was maybe a misalignment or kind of grade error. Obviously not making any excuses for it. The guys have to line up the way we call the formations and execute.

Q. What pressure is it to have some of those flags coming in at this point of the season?

EDDIE FAULKNER: It's frustrating at any point in the season. We just got to clean that up. We're a professional outfit.

Q. Does any of that have to do with change in play callers, how that stuff is going in?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I don't think so, no.

Q. When Mitch is at his best, what does the offense look like?

EDDIE FAULKNER: He's out there just slinging that thing, having fun, playing ball. I think that's what Mitch is a little bit, he's a guy that's going to push the ball down the field and take shots and opportunities. So hopefully we continue to build on that, what his personality is.

Q. What did you think of his performance during the last game?

EDDIE FAULKNER: We're always going to evaluate. We're going to look at the tape and we're going to discuss the things that we see. I don't see any reason to kind of air that out here because that's kind of in-house business. It always will be.

Everybody's performance is going to be evaluated on where they need to improve. We do that in a collective so everybody can be on the same page.

That's what transpired last week. We would expect Mitch to play better, but everybody else to play better.

Q. Are you able to add some plays that maybe you liked or had in the past into the game plan, scheme, or is it too late?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I'll be totally honest with you. That's always been the case, even prior to the change. We've always been able to voice things that we like, plays that we want to do. Obviously the coordinator held the trump card on whether or not we did it, but we have always had the freedom to suggest plays that we like.

Q. You talked about the difference with Mitch between seeing the rush and feeling the rush. When he feels the rush, that allows him to see the rest of the field. Do you expect that to grow after last week's start?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yeah, I mean, I think obviously he wants to have his eyes down the field, be able to get the ball to the play-makers. He has to have enough confidence that the rush is getting picked up, guys are doing their job, so he's not getting hit.

That question falls on the O-line, the backs and the tight ends to make sure he's getting protected.

Q. Do you have a message to the team after a couple of these losses?

EDDIE FAULKNER: You are just always toeing a line and you're not trying to create any panic or do anything like that, but at the same time heighten their sense of urgency on what is going on. I don't feel like I need to say anything other than, Guys, we are in the playoffs right now. Like, we are. We will be for the remainder of the year. That's got to be our mentality and our urgency.

Q. Does the offense have enough of a sense of urgency?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think so, for sure.

Q. Opponents are getting the ball out of their quarterback's hands quicker, maybe all but one team. Is that quick game something that you think Mitch does well?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Absolutely. And like I said earlier, we're trying to, like, streamline things so he can do just that, plays he's comfortable with, so the ball can get out his hand quickly and get it to the guys, put the guys in spots we want them in so they could get the ball out, be the ones that are receiving the ball when it comes out quick.

Q. (Indiscernible) end of the game, would you rather him keep the chains moving at that point or...

EDDIE FAULKNER: You call plays. If you look at that play, there were underneath routes in the concept. You

call plays, the coverage dictates where the ball goes. That's where we expect it to go.

Like T says all the time, we won't live in our fears on the calls, but it's really just that simple.

Q. How do you coach some of the younger guys through the frustrations they have, especially ones that are coming from college programs where they won a lot, the roller coaster of the NFL isn't super familiar?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think what gets lost in the sauce a lot of the times as far as that's concerned is these guys are competitors, they want to win. It's coming from a good place when they show their frustrations. We work with them through that. Just as simple as that. We're still dealing with young men, developing them on how to deal with certain issues. That's kind of the approach we've taken.

Q. With George specifically, some of the frustrations are productive. How do you maybe coach him to channeling that frustration into productivity?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Communicating with him, talking, seeing where his head's at. Just communicating.

Q. Has he been receptive to that?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yes, absolutely.

Q. Coach Tomlin during his press conference talked about consistent ills they're trying to fix, that you guys are trying to fix. On the offensive side of the ball, what do you deem to be those consistent ills and how do you fix them 13 games in?

EDDIE FAULKNER: The consistent ills are popcorn. There's not one thing you go, Okay, if we get that together, everything's going to fall together. It's just things that pop around.

I think in a sense that's easier to fix because, like, Hey, guys, we have to tighten these screws up here and there, and the collective will get better. So for us, that's the biggest issue, is keeping the little things off the tape.

Q. From that standpoint, how is the confidence level of the offense right now?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think it's fine. Like, we had a really good day of work yesterday. I'd expect the same thing today. I haven't gotten any sense of the guys acting funny about the situation they're in. I think they're going to fight

through it.

Q. What is the overall direction, how would you characterize the direction of this offense in the last three weeks? Is it improving or has it regressed at all?

EDDIE FAULKNER: We're steadily working to improve. We come in and go, Okay, why this didn't work? Why didn't it? Let's fix it. This is how we're going to fix it. We move forward.

I don't know if I look at it in that way. I look at it more in the respect of, All right, here's the things we got to get cleaned up so we can be better.

Q. When you look at the tape from Thursday, what was the limiting factor to running the ball?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Third downs, possession downs. We weren't good in possession downs. If you're not on the field, you're not getting an opportunity to run it. I think that's ultimately the number one thing. We had some good runs going that we liked, but we didn't get the continued opportunity because we weren't on the field.

Q. Kenny is not practicing, but is he involved?

EDDIE FAULKNER: In all the meetings, absolutely, yep.

Q. You seem pretty comfortable running early in the game. Is there a fine line as a coach how much you want him to run or design him to run?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Coach T always talks about prudent use of quarterback mobility, meaning in those kind of got-to-have-it situations, the pocket breaks down, him having his ability to use his feet. That's where we keep it.

Q. From a leadership standpoint, how much do you think it helps guys to see Kenny still around?

EDDIE FAULKNER: I think it's huge. I think it's huge. It inspires the coaches when you see him coming through there.

To be honest with you, I wouldn't expect anything less from Kenny because that's how he goes about his business.

Q. Zaire Franklin, what stands out to you on the tape from him?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Physical, smart. A lot of times he's the fifth rusher in what they do. From a running back coach standpoint, when we're picking that guy up, we got to be physical. He plays the game how traditionalists

would love to see it played from a physicality standpoint. Really good football player.

Q. Is there any concern call from Mason's snapping? What have you been talking to him about?

EDDIE FAULKNER: Again, like, those things you got to be careful about how you address it. He has been solid. You hit stretches where maybe things aren't going as great, then the coaches detail it up, work on it, take the approach the best they can in order to get those things better, then we move on.

We don't want to put too much of an emphasis or too much worry on it because we just expect him to do his job. Those are routine things.

Q. (Question about trick plays.)

EDDIE FAULKNER: Yeah, sure, absolutely. But you're repping those plays throughout the year for when you play a defensive structure that allows you to call it.

If we get an opportunity to do it in the right situation, we'll call it.

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